

CITY OF CUPERTINO GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT 1-GPA-80 TECHNICAL APPENDIX - A

COMMUNITY DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

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COMMUNITY DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

Provisions of the general plans, whether they be land use designations, transportation provisions, open space requirements or housing policies, all act together to impose a physical form and image on the city. Unfortunately in many instances the effect of the planning provisions on the appearance and quality of the city have not been consciously considered. The result has been communities which are undistinguished and often unappealing places in which to live and work. It is important, therefore, that the physical quality of the city be consciously considered in the general plan process. Community design decisions should be made as an integral part of other planning decisions to ensure a compatible and mutually supportive relationship between the image, appearance and form of the city and the uses and facilities permitted by the plan.

The current City of Cupertino general plan effort does this by incorporating a community design element into the general plan. This element will serve to clarify community design objectives and establish guidelines to promote consistency in the design of the many public and private development decisions which shape the future form and character of the city. It should be recognized, though, that there is no "right" or "best" solution, but rather a number of acceptable ways of designing the city. What is essential is that the community decide which of these choices they wish to pursue and then establish, through the general plan process, development policies and regulations consistent with the selected objectives.

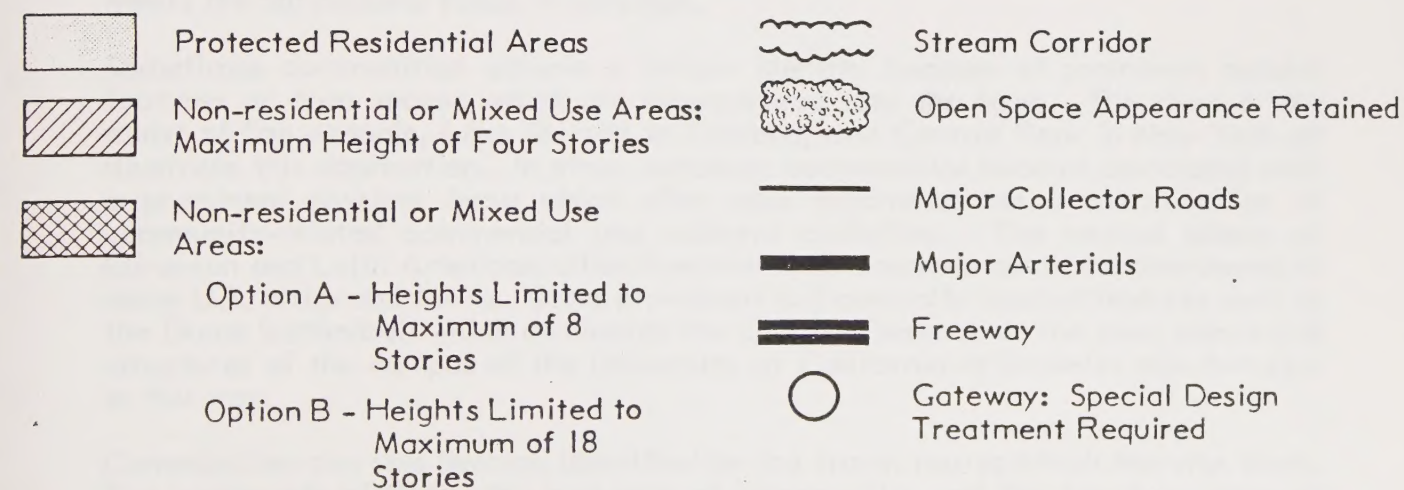
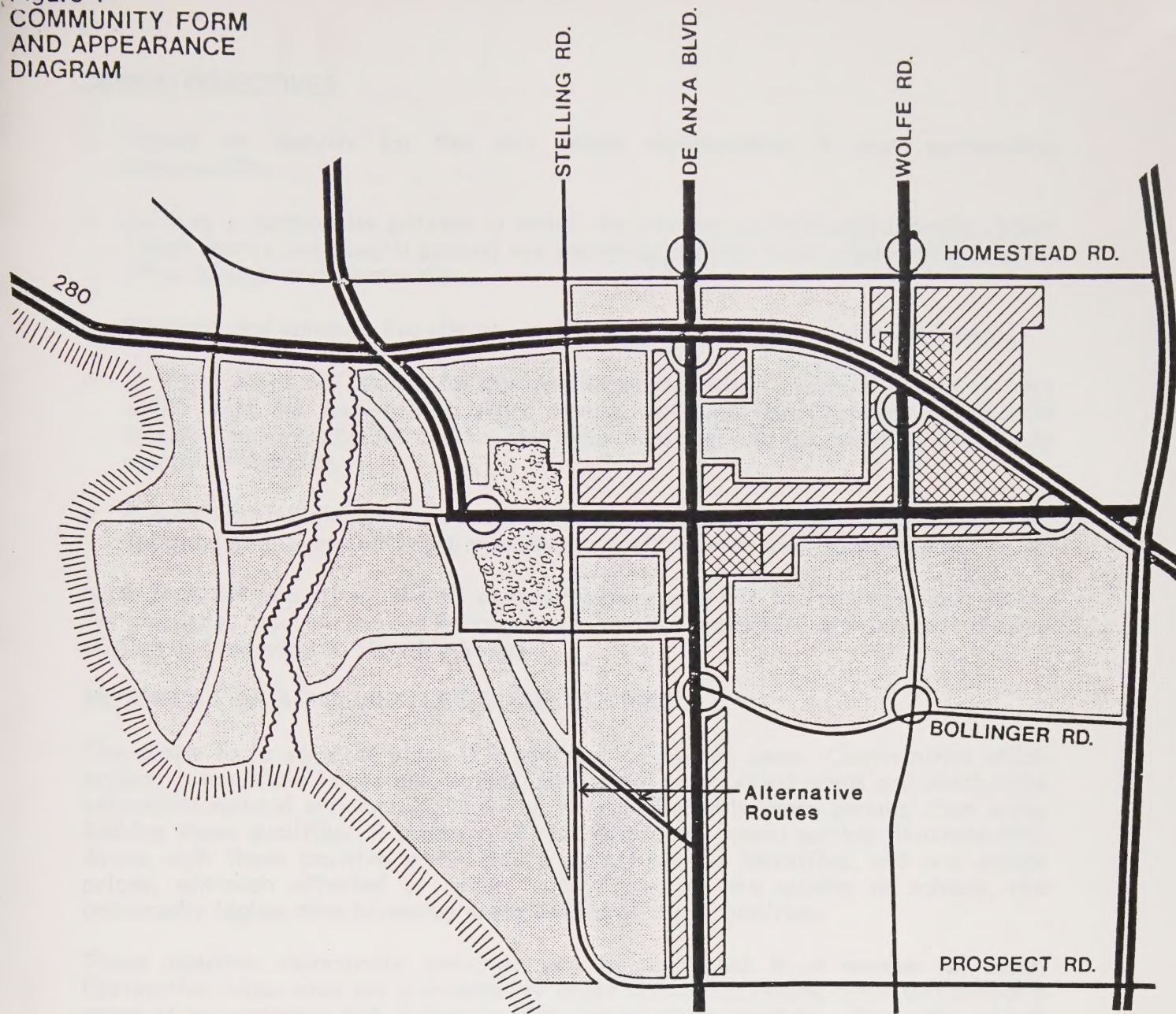
Five key community design objectives are suggested below. These objectives make explicit design objectives embodied in other general plan objectives and provide the foundation on which to base supporting guidelines to achieve these objectives. Figure 1, Community Design Concept Diagram, and accompanying text, sets forth design policies which have been formulated to achieve the recommended community design objectives. As already noted there are many ways of achieving the stated objectives. However, in an already highly urbanized situation such as Cupertino, some of these choices have been preempted by the existing development. It becomes necessary then to identify the opportunities which still remain and decide which of the available choices should be pursued. A brief discussion accompanies each of the guideline recommendations explaining the basis for the recommendation. Where alternatives are identified, a comparison of the choices is provided.



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Figure 1
COMMUNITY FORM
AND APPEARANCE
DIAGRAM



DESIGN OBJECTIVES

- o Create an identity for the city which distinguishes it from surrounding communities.
- o Achieve a community pattern in which the various parts (neighborhoods, major travel routes and special places) are recognizable and their relationship to each other is clear and memorable.
- o Maintain and enhance the identity and livability of existing residential areas.
- o In those areas not slated for residential preservation promote a mix of uses which will: (a) facilitate a more energy efficient development pattern; (b) broaden housing choices and housing opportunities; and (c) enhance the visual quality of the city.
- o Ensure that buildings and related site improvement of all developments are well designed and functionally and visually compatible with their surroundings.

Note that the objectives are all complementary and act to reinforce each other. For example, maintaining and enhancing residential areas serves to promote a more unified and memorable citywide image.

METHODS FOR ACHIEVING DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The desire for a sense of place is a deep rooted human urge. Communities which project a favorable image are distinguished from neighboring areas and which have attractive natural and man-built features are inevitably more popular than areas lacking these qualities. A scanning of real estate ads would quickly illustrate this. Areas with these positive qualities are almost always identified, and real estate prices, although affected by other factors such as the quality of schools, are universally higher than in nearby areas devoid of these qualities.

These positive community qualities can be achieved in a number of ways. Distinctive edges may set a community apart from neighboring areas and create a sense of separateness and, in turn, a high degree of recognition. The waters of San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean which surround San Francisco on three sides have this effect. The same is true of rural communities where the town abruptly meets the agricultural fields at its edges.

Sometimes communities achieve a unique identity because of prominent natural features or open spaces which are incorporated into the town. The river in the midst of San Antonio, Lake Merritt in Oakland, and Central Park in New York all illustrate this application. In other instances communities become associated with a prominent physical focus which often also accommodates a concentration of community-related commercial and cultural activities. The central plazas of European and Latin American cities function in this manner as do the downtowns of many U.S. cities and towns. Other prominent and centrally located features such as the Domo (cathedral) which dominates the City of Florence or the open spaces and structures of the campus of the University of California at Berkeley also function in this way.

Communities can also become identified by the travel routes which traverse them. The boulevards of Paris, the parkways of Kansas City and the lakeshore drive of

Chicago are a few examples where roadways reinforce the identity of a city and impart a favorable image. Needless to say there are also numerous examples of roadway corridors creating a negative community image. Uniformity in building design, landscaping, street pattern and color and materials can also enhance the legibility and image of a community if in contrast with neighboring communities. This principle has been recognized by many communities such as Santa Barbara and Carmel which have established stylistic conditions for development. The same objective, however, can be achieved in a less rigid manner.

Since communities are composed of neighborhoods, commercial areas and other special function areas, it is also important that the relationship of each of these areas to each other be easily understood and thus convey a clear image of the community as a whole. This can be achieved by imparting to each area its own distinctive appearance and by establishing a hierarchy of roads whose respective functions are readily apparent.

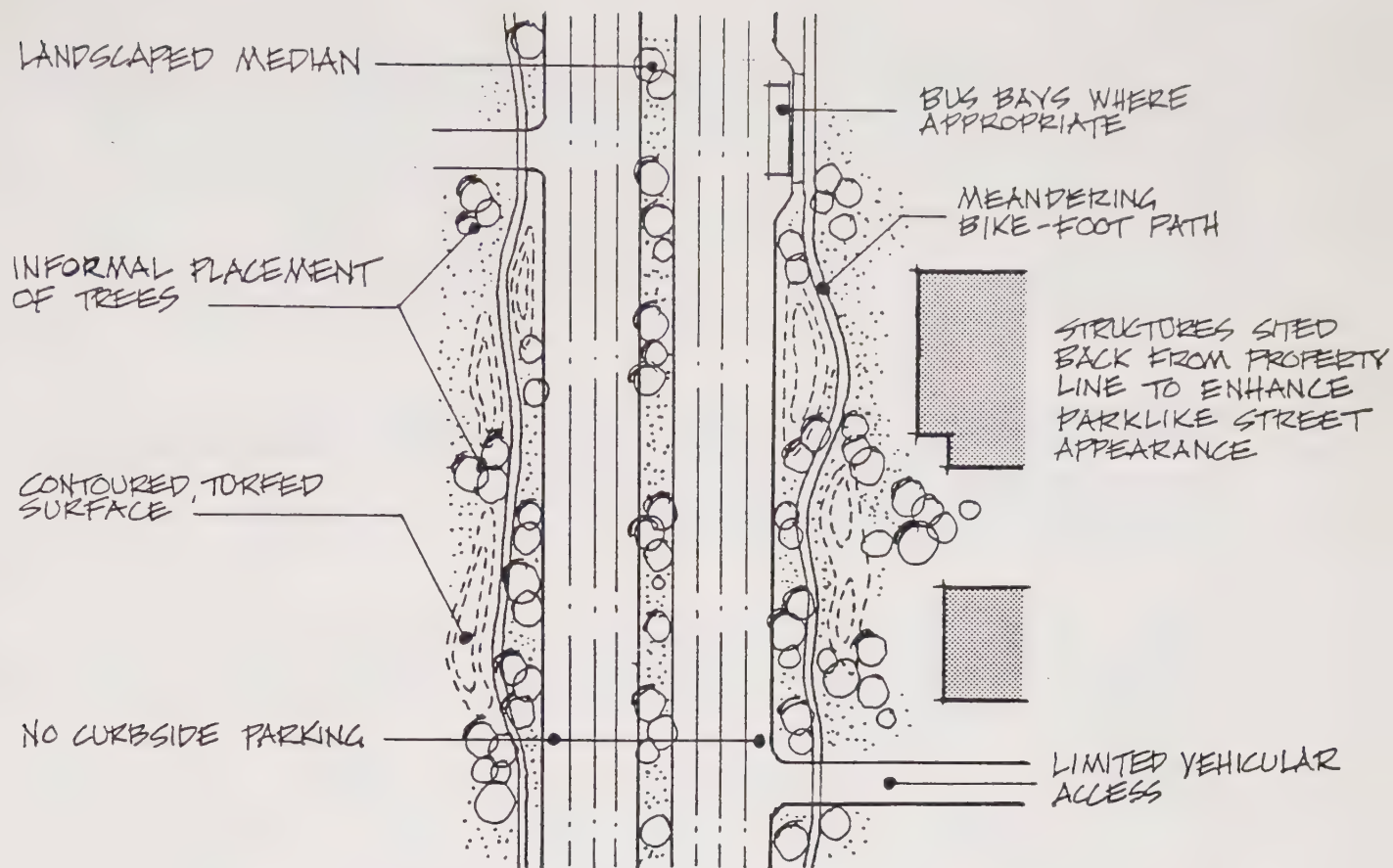
Finally, the entrance ways to a community can be given special prominence to call attention to the community boundaries. This principle is commonly applied in the design of entrances to homes and other structures, in the placement of gatehouse structures or archways at the entrances to exclusive housing areas, and in the planted medians and entrance signs posted at the approaches to many communities.

In most cases communities which have attained a strong sense of identity and positive community image have many or all of these features. In an already urbanized area, such as the Santa Clara Valley, some of possibilities have been preempted by existing development. It is necessary, therefore, for Cupertino to identify the remaining opportunities and selectively build on those opportunities which have the greatest potential. Figure 1 depicts those applications judged to be applicable for Cupertino. These are elaborated on below and the basis for selection discussed.

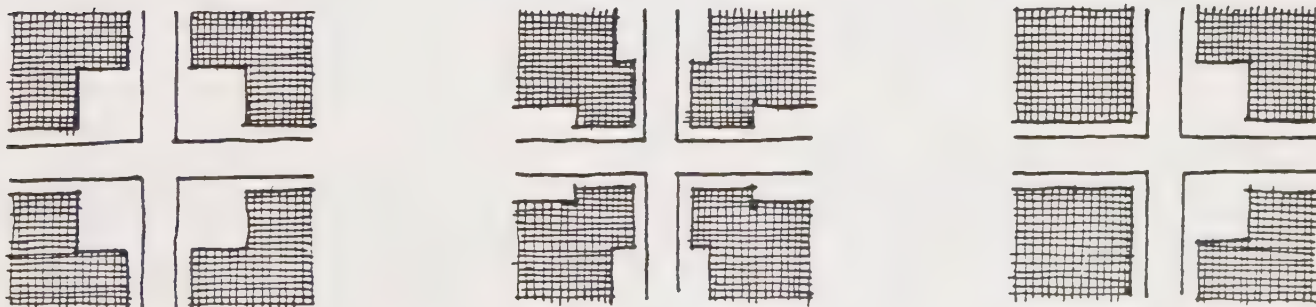
RECOMMENDED DESIGN CONDITIONS

CITY EDGES. For the most part the development pattern and appearance of Cupertino is not readily distinguishable from development along the city's north, east and south edges. Interstate 280 does serve as a boundary of sorts, although it visually isolates small portions of the city to the north. Along the city's west edge, however, the undeveloped hill slopes provide a very prominent boundary which should be maintained. Along this edge an abrupt change from housing to open space is recommended; a low density, dispersed pattern of hill development should be prevented.

GATEWAYS. Major movement in and out of the city is limited to four freeway interchanges and six arterial intersections, three of which coincide with the freeway interchange locations. Each of these points should be designed to emphasize its role as an entry point or exit. This can be done in a number of ways such as providing for a landscape pattern which contrasts with the roadway environment before and after the intersection, by permitting an increase in the mass or height of adjoining buildings, by either siting buildings close to the right-of-way to provide a sense of contrasting enclosure or by providing greater setbacks and a sense of openness, by changing the type and tone of lighting, or by use of paving materials at the intersection approaches which differ from materials used on the remainder of the street. Specific design requirements should be established for each of these points based on a more localized analysis.



TRAVEL CORRIDORS. The strongest elements defining the City of Cupertino are currently its major arterials. The city's location at the western end of Stevens Creek Boulevard and the intersection of De Anza Boulevard and Stevens Creek Boulevard imparts a degree of recognition to the community and its location within the urbanized Santa Clara Valley. At present these roadways convey a conflicting image. Portions repeat the pattern of strip commercial which dominates roadways throughout the county while other segments have a pleasant, informal park appearance. To reinforce a positive image and provide for an integrated appearance, the latter design character should be promoted along the length of both of these streets. The accompanying diagram identifies the main elements contributing to this appearance. Special attention should be drawn to the intersection of these two roadways to emphasize their function and central location within the community. This can be accomplished by either providing a greater sense of building enclosure or open space at the intersection. Any of the methods diagrammed below are acceptable. What is important is to set a consistent



development policy in advance of any further development at this location. Additionally, the landscape materials (trees, lighting, and materials) should contrast with the balance of the street to further reinforce the junction of these roadways. It also is important that a contrasting appearance be provided for Stevens Creek and De Anza Boulevards. Once again this can be achieved by contrasting landscape materials. The cross-town traffic function and the travel speeds associated with this function must also be recognized. Ingress and egress to fronting properties should be limited and landscaping and commercial signage coordinated to ensure adequate visibility of signed by passing motorists while still achieving an attractive appearance.

The image and structure imparted to the city by these two arterials should be further reinforced by differentiating other main roadways. A clear hierarchy should be readily apparent with Stevens Creek and De Anza appearing the most dominant, followed by Wolfe and Homestead Roads which also function as major arterials but in lesser roles, and then by Stelling Road and Miller Avenue which act as major collectors.

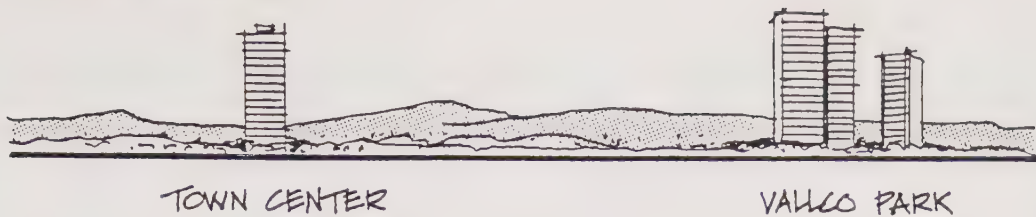
CONTRASTING BUILDING FORMS. The existing form and pattern of the city is dominated by small scale, low-profile residential structures. With few exceptions, the same low-profile is also employed in commercial and industrial areas but with larger building masses. Since the same characteristics prevail in adjoining communities, a sameness is produced which makes it difficult to distinguish Cupertino from its neighbors. Opportunities, however, still exist to provide for contrasting scales of development which could reinforce the identity of the city, help distinguish the various areas of the city from each other, and strengthen the image of the city's roadways identified above. The primary opportunities for contrasting building form occur along Stevens Creek and De Anza Boulevards and in particular on the land holdings of Vallco Park and the southeast quadrant of the Stevens Creek/De Anza intersection (the Town Center).

Figure 1 identifies these areas as locations for non-residential and mixed use development, where housing is integrated with retail and office uses. Major portions of these roadway frontages are shown for a low-profile building form not exceeding four stories in height. This is sufficient to set them apart from neighboring housing areas but low enough so as not to create shadow or privacy problems for adjoining residences. Two areas, Vallco Park the Town Center are recommended for greater heights.

These two areas have been selected because their large parcel size permits construction of taller structures without impinging on neighboring areas and because each occupies a visually prominent and important location in the city. Two options are shown in Figure 1. One choice provides for heights up to eight stories, a building height twice that permitted elsewhere on Stevens Creek and De Anza Boulevards, and another choice would allow up to 18 stories. The latter could apply to all types of structures or be limited solely to hotels which require more external wall surface than office structures. The implications of each of these options are discussed below along with suggested guidelines.

Building Height. If structures within the Town Center and Vallco area are to distinguish these locations from other parts of the city, a sufficient change in scale from the surroundings is necessary. The mid-rise height of eight stories is sufficient to achieve this objective when viewed from most locations along Stevens Creek and De Anza Boulevards. Increase in heights beyond this limit would serve to

18 STOREY OPTION



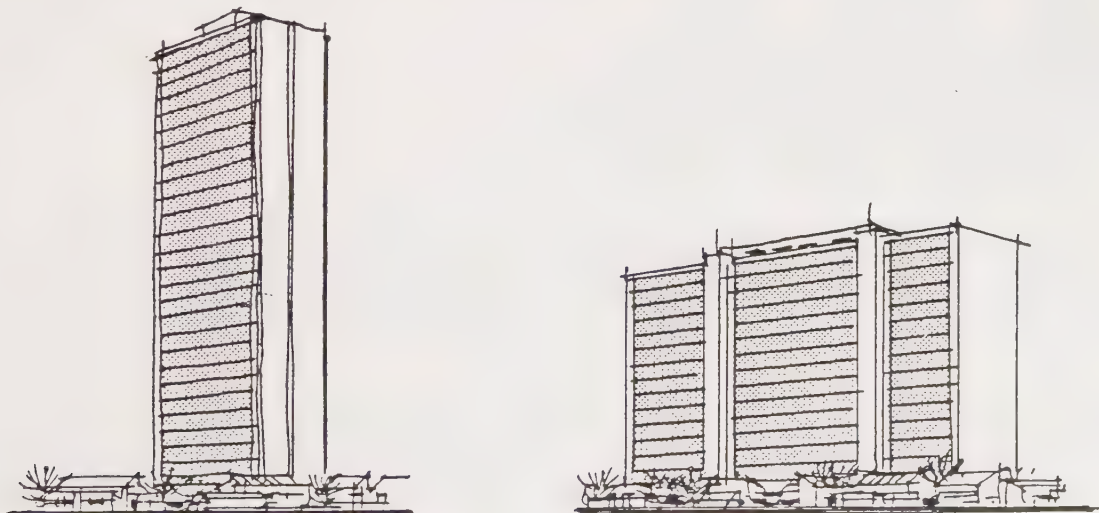
8 STOREY OPTION



TOWN CENTER AND VALLCO PARK SHOULD BE VISUALLY
DISTINGUISHED FROM CITY AND ADJOINING AREAS

heighten the contrast and make these two locations visible from more distant locations but could also produce jarring contrast in scale if not carefully designed. This aspect is discussed further below. In general, the increased height is not required to accommodate the upper range FARs under consideration in the general plan. There is, however, justification for permitting hotel construction in excess of eight stories since hotels require both a narrow building form, due to the dimensions of the individual rooms, and a compact central form for efficient servicing. The opposite case is true for office buildings. Generally there is a desire to have 20,000 to 30,000 square feet per floor and less external wall area so as to reduce construction cost. This requirement when translated into high-rise construction can lead to large, slab-like structures unless specific restrictions are placed on building dimensions.

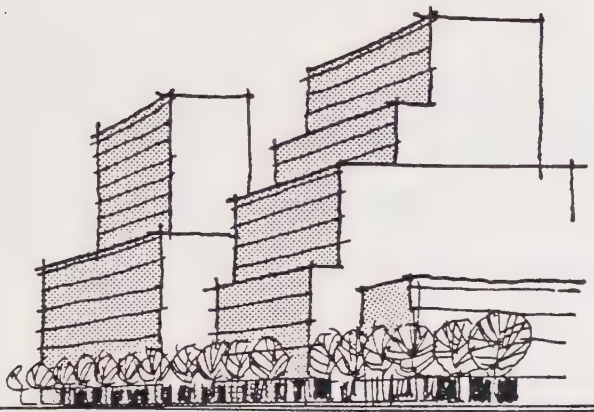
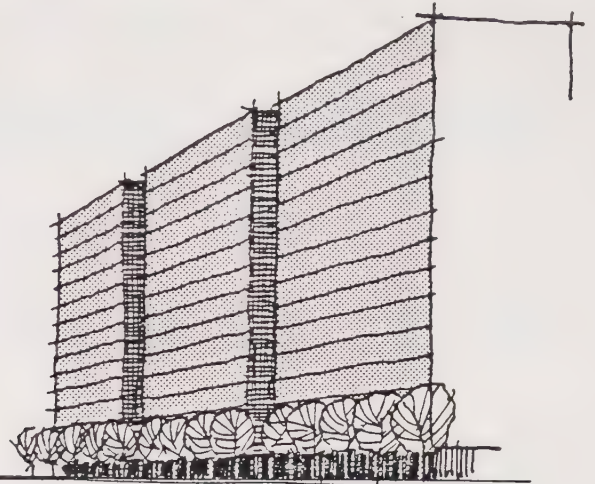
While a contrast in building form from adjacent areas is essential to establish a strong image for the Town Center and Vallco Park areas, too abrupt of a change can be disturbing. An immediate juxtaposition of small scale residential structures with tall or slab-like structures should be avoided by providing a transitional area of three to four story structures. Mid or high-rise structures in which the building length exceeds approximately twice its width should be avoided. Where this is not possible because of a need to provide large floor areas on one level, the building facade should be broken into several planes.



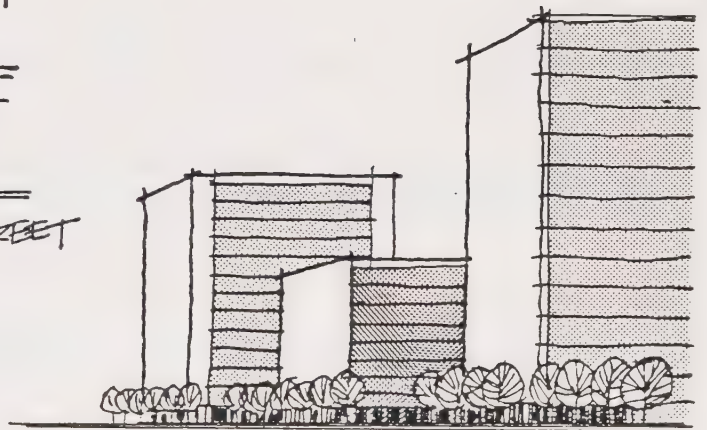
AVOID EXTREME CHANGES IN BUILDING HEIGHT AND LENGTH

Although a canyon-like appearance will not be possible on Stevens Creek Boulevard due to the distance between the two areas identified for taller structures, a monotonous wall-like appearance could occur along the Vallco Park frontage under either the 8 or 18 story height options. This should be avoided by (a) orienting the length of the structures perpendicular to Stevens Creek Boulevard; (b) varying the setback of the structures from the front property line; and (c) varying the building heights.

AVOID SLAB-LIKE APPEARANCE



STEPPED BUILDING FACADE BACK FROM STREET



PERPENDICULAR TO STREET BUILDING
ORIENTATION - VARIED SETBACK

The relationship between height limits and allowable floor area (FAR) must also be recognized. For example, a low FAR combined with permissive height limits could lead to an extensive portion of a building site being occupied by surface parking. A brief comparison of the interrelationship of FAR and height is shown below.

A parking requirement of one space for each 350 square feet of building area and 20 percent of the ground area devoted to landscaping and access has been assumed. The figures shown are based on a one acre site. Note that the average building height can be achieved by a mix of low, mid and/or high-rise structures.

FAR 2.2 (upper limit proposed for Vallco Park)

Total floor area permitted equals 95,800 square feet. Parking equals 275 spaces or 87,600 square feet of surface area.

1. Eight Story Average

Ground area occupied by structure, exclusive of parking, equals 12,000

Balance of site remaining for surface parking equals 22,800 or an area sufficient to accommodate 71 cars. Therefore approximately 204 cars would have to be accommodated in structure.

2. Four Story Average

Ground area occupied by structure, exclusive of parking, equals 23,950 square feet.

Balance of site remaining for surface parking equals 10,900 or an area sufficient to accommodate 34 cars. Therefore approximately 241 cars would have to be accommodated in structure.

FAR 1

Total floor area permitted equals 43,560 square feet. Required parking equals 124 spaces or 39,800 square feet of surface area.

1. Eight Story Average

Ground area occupied by structure, exclusive of parking, equals 5,500 square feet.

Balance of site remaining for surface parking equals 29,300 square feet or an area sufficient to accommodate 92 cars. Therefore approximately 32 cars would have to be accommodated in structure.

2. Three Story Average

Ground area occupied by structure, exclusive of parking, equals 14,500 square feet.

Balance of site remaining for surface parking equals 20,300 square feet or an area sufficient to accommodate 64 cars. Therefore approximately 60 cars would have to be accommodated in structure.

FAR .75 (upper limit proposed for Town Center)

Total floor area permitted equals 34,000 square feet. Required parking equals 97 spaces.

1. Eight Story Average

Ground area occupied by structure, exclusive of parking, equals 4,250 square feet.

Balance of site remaining for surface parking equals 30,600 square feet or an area sufficient to accommodate 95 cars. Therefore all required parking could be accommodated without construction of enclosed or covered parking.

2. Three Story Average

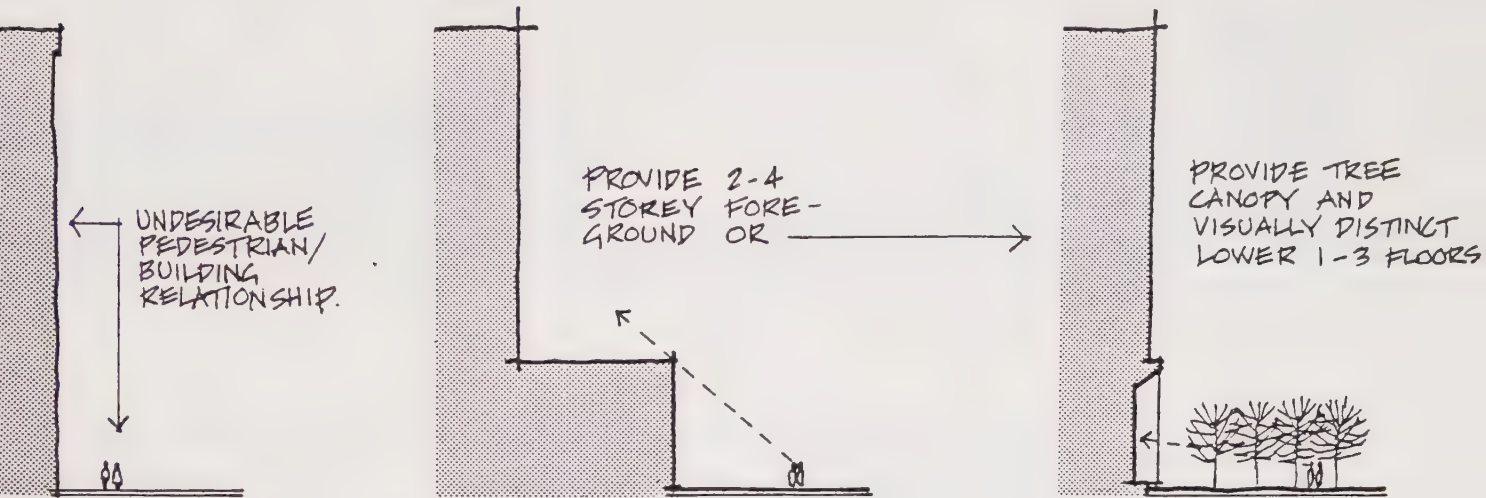
Ground area occupied by structure, exclusive of parking, equals 11,300 square feet.

Balance of site remaining for surface parking equals 23,500 square feet or an area sufficient to accommodate 73 cars. Therefore approximately 24 cars would be accommodated in structure.

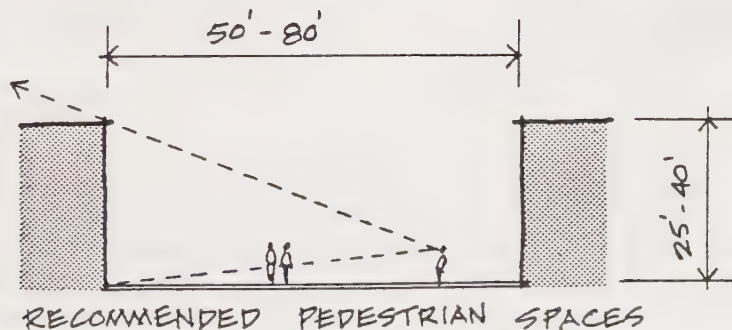
The implications of the various FAR and average height combinations are as follows:

1. Permitting more latitude in building height at the lower FAR range could lead to more surface parking since the cost of structured parking can be avoided.
2. At the higher FAR ranges more permissible heights may not lead to elimination of surface parking and provision of more ground level open space, since there will be a tendency to maximize use of ground level space released by use of taller structures for surface parking to avoid the additional construction cost.
3. If more permissible height limits are allowed to reinforce the identity of the Town Center and Vallco Park and there is a desire to minimize preemption of ground level space by cars, additional provisions specifying amount of site area devoted to open space will be required.
4. If there is a desire to minimize surface parking on sites designated with lower building heights, such as most areas along Stevens Creek and De Anza Boulevards, this objective can be partially achieved by increasing the permitted FAR to approximately 1.5. Total elimination of surface parking, however, can only be achieved by specifying the percent of site area to be retained in open space. The increase in allowed FAR, however, would help offset the economic hardships, i.e. additional cost of providing structured parking produced by this requirement.

Several other potential design problems associated with mid and high-rise structures should be noted. Abrupt pedestrian exposure to tall building facades should be avoided if a human scale is to be retained at ground level. The accompanying diagrams illustrate methods to avoid this problem.



A comfortable scale should also be achieved within the Town Center and Vallco sites. In those outdoor areas designed to accommodate pedestrians both excessive width of the open spaces, with the exception of major plazas or park areas, should be avoided as should tall structures along the immediate edge of the pedestrian area.

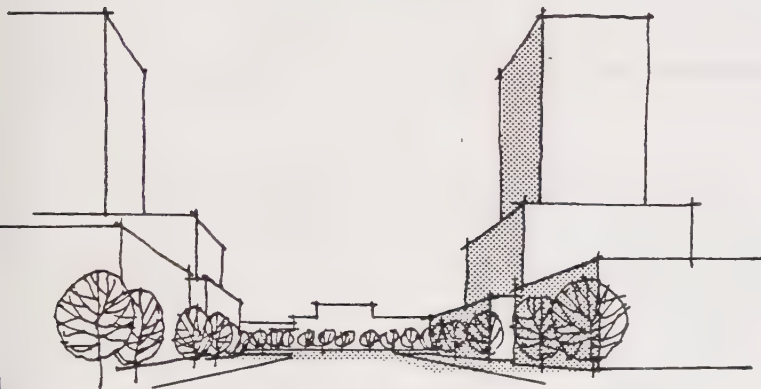


In general abrupt changes in building scale should be avoided. As shown below, a more gradual transition between the prevailing one and two story development and 8 and 18 story structures should be achieved by introducing 3 and 4 story buildings at the perimeter of the project site.

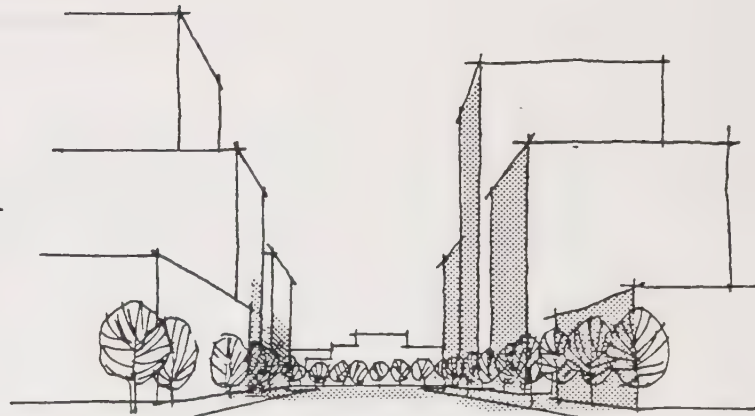


PROVIDE TRANSITION BETWEEN LOW BUILDINGS AND MID- AND HIGH RISE STRUCTURES

Other problems can occur where small residential streets lead into large scale building complexes. This condition can lead to canyon-like street spaces which would be inconsistent with the more open appearance of the area. This can be avoided, as shown in the accompanying diagram, by stepping the building masses back from the street edge.



USE STEPPED-BACK BUILDING FACADES



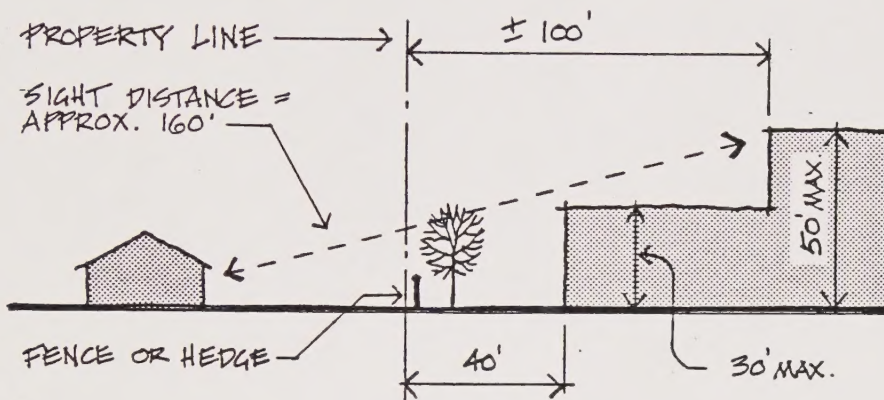
AVOID CANYON EFFECT

Potential conflict between building heights and already existing residential areas can also occur in those portions of Stevens Creek and De Anza Boulevards which fall outside the Town Center and Valco Park sites. Although heights are limited to 4 stories, smaller parcel sites could lead to incompatible building relationships if appropriate safeguards are not provided. To provide an acceptable transition between the residential and non-residential or mixed use areas, the following guidelines should be adhered to.

1. Maintain a setback and height relationship equivalent to the prevailing street-front relationships within the adjoining residential area.

2. Provide a five to six foot buffer wall or screen along the common property line and supplement with continuous planting of trees which will provide a 20 to 30 foot high visual screen. Where the trees are planted along the south edge of a residential property, maintain a setback sufficient to prevent shading of the residence's backyard.
3. Provide for visual privacy by limiting portions of the structures in excess of 30 feet height to areas of approximately 100 feet from the rear property line, orienting the narrow face of the structure toward the residential properties and/or eliminating facing windows or providing screens or louvers which prevent direct visual contact.

More locationally specific guidelines should be incorporated into a specific plan for these areas.



NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION. Figure 1 schematically identifies areas of the city where the primary residential function should be preserved. In each of these areas new development should be limited to structures which maintain the prevailing building scale. Additional efforts should be made to reinforce the individual identity of these areas. This can be achieved in a number of ways such as by the use of similar landscaped materials, better definition of the neighborhood boundaries through redesign of roadways which serve as edges, and encouraging use of similar materials and colors throughout the area. Areas identified should also be protected from intrusion by through traffic. Consideration should be given to reconfiguring streets within the area so as to both discourage disruptive through traffic and establish a more cohesive organization for the area. More detailed surveys should be made to determine the exact boundaries of these areas and specific guidelines, which build upon localized features and conditions, prepared to safeguard and enhance the areas.

OPEN SPACE FEATURES. In addition to the western hill slopes, two other open space features should be recognized and incorporated into the citywide design concept. The first is the Stevens Creek corridor and the second, the combination of the De Anza College site and the facing Memorial Park. Although the campus is substantially built up, the landscaping, especially as seen from adjoining roadways, gives an impression of open space. The combination of the campus and the park are important features of the Stevens Creek Boulevard corridor which should be recognized and integrated with other community features.

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